Dear Reader,

Open the book you hold in your hand
And let me share memories with you
Some of them happy, some of them sad
And most of them totally true

Sometimes I think about friends when I write
But more often I think about me
When I'm in trouble or making mistakes
Writing is my choice of therapy

So find a soft chair or comfortable couch
And make a fresh pot of tea
Clear your mind of distracting thoughts
And share memories with me

—Patricia Swan

ISBN: 978-0-9840727-4-3
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Poetry

Swan

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A Fifty Year Collection
by Patricia Swan

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Published in the United States
by
Intellectual Property Associates
276 Dennis Street
Tumwater, WA 98501
N914TJ@comcast.net

811.6 - dc23

ISBN 978-0-9840727-4-3

Dedication

The motivation for many pieces of this collection came from disappointments and doubts, so I dedicate my poetry to those people who challenged me to write my pain away. Others came on the wings of the muse.

Acknowledgement

Brian Willis and his writing class gave me encouragement. Thank you class. Most of all, I want to acknowledge all those people who read my work aloud so I could hear the song in the poem, especially the Sunday Brunch Bunch. Also, I thank Bob Chester for editing almost everything in the collection. Melissa Layer helped me get *Poetry* printed, a big job.

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Who Is She?

She lives her life at the Y
Exercise takes half her day
She does Tai Chi three times a week
And the treadmill is okay.
She‘s 63 and married twice
Now she’s retired and free
She smiles a lot and dresses nice
Now tell me, who is she?
A clue, it’s 1999.

Patricia Swan

Memories

Tie the Knot

2014

The bride and groom tied the knot
And all was right with the world.
As time went by the groom forgot
And the knot became unfurled.

The bride held tight to fraying ends
A collection of transgressions.
The groom wished not to make amends
Or turn mistakes to lessons.

The loosened knot fell apart
And neither one did care
To fix the fraying knot,
And start new affair.

But experience speaks, and the groom found
The bride pleased him when he let her.
Besides he had looked around
And failed to find one better.

A Friend

2011

A friend will see the tear in your eye
And know why it's there,
She will listen without giving advice
and you'll feel safe in her presence.

A friend will celebrate your joys,
Laugh at your jokes
and watch the movie that no one else likes
because you want to see it.

She will give you a ride to the airport
and meet you at return,
She will bring a green salad to your barbecue
And stay for clean up after it's over.

She will leave her home in the middle of the night
to take care of you when you're sick
She will hold you close when tragedy hits
and bring you food in your grief.
A friend will know your deepest secrets
and keep your mistakes in confidence.
She will respect your family and your friends Even
though she would not choose them for herself.

A friend is there when you need her and gone when you don’t.
And you’d do the same for her.

My Prince

1986

My prince is a black knight
His fractured coat of arms
Scattered by the winds.

His night dreams
Filled with screams of dying men
In scorched battle-fields of distant lands.

His hopes of glory fade
As he stares into the ashes
Of his charred armor.

His castle stands
Undefended
Occupied by strangers.

He looks far away
To a new beginning
To battle windmills of what might be.

He gazes into the black hole of a bottle
And isolates himself
By a mote of intoxication.
His shadowy thoughts
Blend and blur

As he contemplates the Knight of Darkness.

The Black Prince gallantly protects me
From the pain of tomorrow,
Oblivious to the pain of today.

Fantasy

1971

To us a fantasy is real
Set apart from ordinary life.

Our desire leads us
As two children playing in the sun.

We float far above the responsibility
Of our years

And transcend the shackles of decisions
Made before.

We reach for love

But these are fleeting illusions,
Lost as we stand startled by reality.

Torment

1976

Out of the night you came to remind me
Of what I had hoped to put away forever.

Now my memories stand naked and cold against
A wall of never-to-be*s*.

You came to unmask my pretenses,
To torment me with your untouchable reality,

Then to disappear.

If I Had One Wish

1974

If I had one wish
Granted to me
If I had one wish
What would it be?

Would it be treasures
Like rubies and gold
Or beautiful things
Too grand to behold?

Would it be peace
For all of mankind
Leaving strife and war
Forever behind?

Would it be joy
And laughter so bright
Or the serious splendor
Of a star-studded night?

Would it be knowing
I'd see you again
Knowing your heart
I'd eventually win?

Would it be holding you
As I have in the past
And being able to make
The special times last?

All of these things
I'd like very much
And many more blessings
To know and to touch.

But if I had one wish
I know what it'd be

That you could express
Your love for me.

And all of the fears
That we share today
Because of our secrets
Would just fade away.

Loving a Snowflake

One day a snowflake landed in my hand,
The beauty of his fragile intricate design
Fascinated me,
I wanted to take him home
And love him forever.

My snowflake needed the cold
To remain the way he was
Crystalline, angular, and beautiful
The warmth of my hand
Created a different shape
To one I did not know

As I held him briefly
I saw him change
Fearing the loss of his beauty from the world
I let the snowflake fall to the ground
Remaining free to be
As he was meant to be

A snowflake.

Years Ago

If I had met you years ago
What would we have said?

If you had touched my hand back then
Where would it have led?

But I didn't meet you years ago
I met you yesterday.

Our lives are set in routine pace
Predicted in every way.

Should we pass on by
And forget the way we feel?

Or should we admit that what we have
In every way is real?

Could we have known those years ago
We'd be this way today?

Or would we have felt no response
And casually walked away?

I know that I cannot speak for you
But my thoughts do allow

My love for you to be here today
Because I love you now.

Mystic Fog

2004

My bare toes
dip into shallow water
warmed by the sun.
My feet rest on smooth
riverbed pebbles.

I sit on the bank
listen to the wind
and answer the river.
All is right.

I feel
the startle of a cat's
rough tongue at daybreak
rumpled cotton sheets
nature's urgent call.

I don't feel
the silent invader
growing inside
the painless enemy
positioned to conquer.

Expect a fight.
I won't give up.
I will speak to the river
listen to the wind
dip my toes into the stream
and heal.

The Solitary Oak

1977

You are strong, the solitary oak
Standing alone in a lush green field.

The golden sunlight warms you and you soften.

You stand quiet, patient, independent and
Without need, a sentry unarmed.

The small, the delicate, the weak seek refuge
In the strength of your branches and the
Coolness of your shade.

In natural balance, you provide stability in
A storm of moving life.

Playground of Delight

1973

You touched my hand and reached far
Into my soul.

In your grasp, you encouraged
a confused and
Lonely child.

You created for the child a playground
Of delight—a playground walled
By discretion

And the child laughed and sang
And was unafraid.

Now you're gone, and the child has
Returned to the shadows

Clutching the petals of memory
In her hand.

Rescue

2004

On that darkened street one Wednesday night
your actions said it all.
You stayed with me.

I will remember.
And over time, as circumstances
take us in different directions,
I will tell my grandchildren
about the man on a white horse,
(or was it a red car?)
who rescued me from Seattle's streets.

I will not tell my grandchildren
that I wished I were younger,
and had the freedom and the confidence
to explore the yearning I feel.

I will instead fill the void with
treasurers of the mind,
and stimulating exchanges of intellectual wit,

And honor the feelings of those who have shaped
The person you are
And those who have made me
The person I am committed to be.

Love Is

2011

Love is:
• Listening when I need your attention
• Leaving me alone when I don't

Love is:
• Sharing our day
• And our resources

Love is:
• Reading together
• Discussing ideas
• Debating

Love is:
• Being helpful
• Being sexual
• Being there when we need each other

Love is:
• Being seen as a couple
• Exclusive

Love is:
• Trust
• Reliability
• Compassion
• Honesty

Love is *nothing special.*
Love is you.

America the Beautiful

Red White and Blue

2003

Wars happen somewhere else,
Not on our soil, not in the United States.
Two oceans and the Statue of Liberty
Keep the guns and bombs away.

We're under attack.
Who? How? From where?
Our own planes? Can't be.
Must be a terrible accident.

A second plane just like the first.
Showed it on TV.
People fall from flaming towers,
Sirens scream in the streets.

So far away.
So unreal.
What can we do?

Wave the flag,
Dress in red white and blue,
And find someone to blame.

Hands

2000

Tiny clenched fist flailing at the sky,
Newborn hands with a newborn's cry.

Fingers pinch a large sized crayon
One stroke for practice then again

Teen hands shooting at a basket rim
With a zing the ball goes in

Soldier's hands lie still, eyes closed
His body rest in flag draped repose.

Love to Hate

For those who love to hate
Life is a battlefield
The spoils are many to be taken ruthlessly
The enemies multiply
With each victory
They must stamp out the tools of peace
So the war may go on.

Error

1977

I turn my face away
I close my ears
I close my mind
But the truth lingers
Quietly
Gently
Waiting for an open moment
Waiting to pounce
To show my weakness
My human error

Fun With Words

Words

2003

Words on the page

Jump from your thoughts to mine,

Slightly changed,

Greatly interpreted, refined.

Color them purple,

With meter, alliteration, rhyme.

Color them orange,

With a studied sense of time.

Words we share bring us where

Emotions lock

In frustration, passion, fear,

And sometimes writer’s block.

Twiddle Nonsense

2003

Tweedle de, tweedle dum, for this you come
A bristling and a bustling all the way
Dum ta de, Tweedle yum, where're you from?
So tell me all you have to share and say

A bristling and a bustling all the way.
Your glib tongue flows, your heart's on fire
So tell me all you have to share and say.
You set me free, you calm my ire,

Your glib tongue flows, your heart's on fire,
So sing tra la la, and smile your smile,
You set me free, you calm my ire.
I rest and wonder, relaxed a while,

So sing tra la la, and smile your smile,
Dum ta de, tweedle yum, where're you from?
I rest and wonder, relaxed a while.
Tweedle de, tweedle dum for this you come?

Jumprope Chant

2003

Gile and gimbal, slitherly snake
Ten green frogs on a garden rake
Elves on a thimble hesitate
Silver dollars on their plate

Turn around.
Touch the ground.
Hands on your head.
Skip to town.

Raucous ruckus monkeys spin
Lift their tails an' spin again
Hands in their pockets toes in a bin
Heels a jumpin' like holy sin.

Turn around.
Touch the ground.
Jump once more.
Don't make a sound.

Jumprope snappin' the concrete path
Jumpin' feet beatin' rhythm fast
A snap tap tappin' first and last
The game is done, the jumpin' past.

Turn around.
Touch the ground.
One, two, three.
Next jumper’s round.

The Cell Phone

2003

The cell phone
The tool of universal connection
Innocuous in the palm of a hand
Creative thought
Independent action
Now a web of connection.
No need to problem solve
To reason
To experience the delight
Of being alone.
Just push a button
Those who know,
Those who care,
Those who won't let you make a mistake
Will answer your call.
Parents,
Bosses,
Friends,
Power,
Big Brother
All those
To tell you what to do
What to think.

The Economy

2003

Buy
Consume
Get it now
Only $9.99
Don’t be without!
Empty your pockets.
Max your plastic.
It’s good for the economy.

Drive
Cruise
Speed
Fill the tank
At any price
Drive by yourself
In gridlock crawl
Road rage in gear.
It’s good for the economy.

Toss
Throw
Dump
The wrong color
$9.99 mistake
Landfill beauty

In deep decay
Tainting the water
It’s good for the economy

Pledge

2003

I pledge allegiance
To The Market
And to the pollution
For which it stands
One planet
Under garbage
Indistinguishable
With global warming
And acid rain
For All.
It’s good for the economy.

A Wiggly Worm

2003

A wiggly woggly worm
met a squigily squawily bug.

Hello, said the worm
Nice day, said the bug
And they wiggled across a blue rug.

A crafty cantankerous crow
A neighborhood thug, you know,
Cawed to his crew
And they immediately flew
Because they knew that they should.

A meal said the crow
A snack said the crew
And they pecked and they poked at the two
But they had little success
And even confessed
They didn't know what to do.

Not me, said the bug
I'm no crow's last plug
And he caught a swift wind as it blew
I'll crawl under the rug
And opened his wings and he flew.

But the worm's great escape
Was contentiously draped
In his camouflage cape
A secrete to even the bug
A cocoon in the make
Secure and crow-safe as he grew.

First Place

In the first place,
A first place is something special,
Something we place first in our thoughts.

My thoughts reflect The first place I lived in Washington.
It was the first place
To the right of the manager's office.

My favorite recipe for blueberry pie
Was a first place winner
In Country Woman's
Pie baking contest.

The directions say
"First, place all ingredients
On the counter and preheat
The oven."

The person who won
The First Place award
Lives on a Century Farm
The first inhabited place
In First Place county.

The Write Place

The write place, a place to write
The write time, anytime, day or night
The write mood, a calling from the muse
A guiding voice whose errors we excuse
A write day, today is mine
But any day, when inclined.
The write friends, those who share the craft
Most are sane, but the best are a little daft
The write verse, one with a beginning and an end
With something in between to read to friends
Bryan's 1:30 class is a write school,
A prompt each week is a write tool
I could celebrate with drum and fife
Instead, I thank you all for a write life.

Broken Heart

The Doughnut Hole

2017

You are the empty hole in the center of my doughnut
A space with the meaningful part somewhere else
You leave a shapeless emptiness not easily filled
But the void leaves little nourishment
The part of you that was always gone.

When I dwell on what is missing, what has changed,
I realize that it was never there
But I hoped that your kindness came from Love
And I was the one you thought about at night.
I was wrong.

Some fanciful lover shared your bed
Someone you looked for during the day
Someone who shares your daytime dreams
Someone who likes to play the game of attraction
Someone who's very different from me.

The doughnut hole is all that's left for me
And it has grown larger than the doughnut
Its emptiness leaves space for something new
Something that catches me by surprise
Something you can't share.

Your world is new and filled with promise
One last chance to live a dream
An opportunity to change, to become fulfilled
But while you're gone, I too will change
I will have lost my need for you.

Dawn
1972

I opened my eyes and for the first time I saw the sunrise.
I feared to blink or the magnificence might disappear
    Until I realized my eyes were still closed.

I thought I knew you, but your brilliance frightened me away,
    And I remain knowing you not at all.

I leave behind the broken pieces of beholden beauty
    I once created until that part of myself I so feared began to show
    And I smashed it against the rocks.

I cry for expression and affection from within the walls
    I have created as my prison,

The prison of safety from the hurt that may somehow force
    The maturity I fear.

Let me remain an innocent child in this limbo between
    The somewhere I've been
    And the somewhere yet unknown.

This sterile culture leaves me hungry for the virility
    Of living I can no longer digest.

There is no pain here.
    In reality, there is no feeling.

Mother's Day
2009

A silver frame held in a parchment hand,
Eyes red from age, wind, sand,
An unwashed stench, a ragged dress,
Gray strands of smoke drenched hair,
A mother.

Children? *Yes, twins, now grown and gone.*
See them? *No, not for many years.*

Their trinkets: a plaster hand, a carnival ring,
A stick figure of Mother,
Hidden in a cardboard box, behind a loose rock,
In the wall, under the bridge,
Her home.

Burst of Brilliance

2014

What we know and love and hold so dear,
In blink of eye or careless word in rhyme
Can disappear, can fail the test of time.
Solid rock, pure gold, true love, all clear,

All known to last forever, thus we cheer
Their meaning and assume them quite benign.
Because we want a continuous incline
The best of all our talents to appear,

We ponder the brevity of what has gone before,
The endless list of applauded wins and defeats.
We cherish the chance we have to show our might,

Our impact on the future, our rapport
With time itself. As we race to the end, we seek
A burst of brilliance before eternal light.

Reverence

2014

On the mountain top, look out to see
What thoughts will stir your hardened heart
Now that time has passed and we are apart.
With another you trample a favored memory.
Although I cannot change what is to be,
I feel betrayed. My thoughts ramble and dart
From what was to what is to a new start
The good times of the past meant much to me.
With another, without me, you cast aside
A piece of our past, a piece of shared joy
Sure of yourself, of your goals, without doubt.
You make your plans with enthusiasm and pride
Not a thought about the feelings you destroy
With each plan you carelessly let out.

Through My Tears

Through my tears I saw you standing before me
Without empathy or understanding
You watched me cry.
I saw anger and distorted history
I saw rationalization
I saw you but I didn't see me.

I loved you for twenty years
It was not perfect love
But it never is.
It was a love I could rely on
A practical love
A love I trusted to the end.

But you had desires that took you away from me
That took you to the arms of another
And what we had is not enough
You blame me for making decisions on my own
You blame me for disagreeing with you
You blame me for loving you.

Now that I need care and am no longer
Able to care for you
You found another who can
And I am easily turned out to fend for myself.
Through my tears I see a selfish monster
Ready to hurt me to justify his version of the truth.

A Little Place Called Love

There's a place in my heart
A place that's growing old
Like my human heart, it's wearing out
Its story has been told.

You walked away and left me here
To survive as best I can
You have private things to do,
Quest of an independent man

Memory's breadcrumbs lead me back
To when it was once good
Pictures, books, and calendars
Times I understood

The little place I once called love
Is growing smaller still
But I see a black hat in the crowd
And I feel a lovers' thrill

This little place I call love
Was reserved for only you
Bur it's growing smaller every day
And I have other things to do.

Trust

Trust dances brightly in the shadows
Gracefully flowing toward the light
Then disappearing
Seemingly gone forever.

Who are you?
Who do I need to be?
Will trust dance beside us?

Trust shyly smiles as we share private moments
But quickly retreats from our clumsy mistakes
She winks her eye and coyly dances away.

Who am I?
Who do you need to be?
Will trust dance between us?

Trust shrinks and fades when doubt enters
And disappointment manages the stage.
She dances behind pride and ignorance.

Who are we?
Who do we need to be?
Will trust dance within us?
Perhaps we can coax her forward, to center stage.
Perhaps we can charm her shy soul

With the music from within our hearts
And she will dance for us.

Perhaps, one day, we will trust.

My Dignity

He needs to be in charge
A relationship at the price of my dignity
I disappoint him
You could have if you tried

A relationship at the price of my dignity
An obstacle in our relationship
You could have if you tried
More parental than usual

An obstacle in our relationship
You could have if you tried
More parental than usual
He needs to be in charge.

Two Hearts

2013

Two hearts,
Two breaking hearts
So close
So far apart.

A cloud
A dark cloud
Just ahead
Threatening.

What is is not enough
What might be stands just beyond
Making promises that can't be kept.

What's left is all there is
All we have
Alone
Or together.

Thoughts and Feelings

Fear

The shadow of the monster, fear, shades my soul
Its companions, anxiety and doubt, penetrate my logic
I cringe in its path as I move toward the light.
If only it would stand aside and let me pass.

Over there stands escape – brightness
But here the world is dark, threatening
Hope and courage urge me on.

I look beyond to a retreat
But charred pieces of what went wrong remain
I must go forward
Confront the monster
And move toward the light.

Moving Day

2015

Moving boxes piled deep, and high, and wide
Furniture in wrap, some taken apart
The truck is waiting on the street outside
To take what's left to a fresh new start.

Memories tossed, sold or given away
Creates space for the yet to be
For the special, the fresh, for life's new way
And all are blurred, dim, hard to see.

With hope comes uncertainty and change
An empty canvas, a blank piece of space
To contain a future, we arrange
The old, the new, together, in a place.

With deep felt courage we begin again.
But we hesitate, we pause, to grieve an end.

Beauty Is

Beauty is haughty
Accented in lavish detail
Framed in metallic brilliance
Elevated to pampered status on the top shelf
To gather dust and grow old

Or

Beauty is a simple thing
A swirling leaf, blown from the tree
Falling to rest on a well-worn path
Where it is caught forever
In electronic memory.

The Plain Plait

2003

The elder shaman placed his hand
On the ceremonial plate
Setting on an ancient table
Near an incredible fork,
Noticeably simple in plain
Sculptured Arizona silver.

His fingers clutched a large silver
Coin. His weathered dark skinned hand
Clenched. The earth quaked. Walls in the plain
Longhouse shook. His shiny black plait
Swayed. Possessed, the silver fork
Danced upon the ancient table.

The ceremonial table
Flipped with all legs up, the silver
Trim cracking. The old silver fork
Slid. He opened his agile hand,
Saved the valued ceramic plate,
And rushed to a sycamore plane.

He walked across the barren plain
To where the river came to fork.
Beneath his feet a shifting plate
Went still. He clutched the large silver
Coin in his aging sweaty hand
And surveyed the flat earth's table.

Beyond the raging river's fork
Among ancient gods on the plain
The treasure in his faithful hand
He offered the hostile table
Rock. His hand free of the silver
Coin, with a knife he cut his plait.

He knotted the swinging black plait
And laid it where he drew a fork
In the soil, placed the silver
And the plait on the dusty plain
Place of sacrifice, the table
Rock calmed by shaman's empty hand.

Table rock beyond river's fork
Refused silver coin from his hand
But received his shiny plain plait.

We Play Cards

2015

We play the cards, twelve cards each
Sort the cards in red and black
A giant score we hope to reach
Some cards we wish we could put back

Sort the cards in red and black
How many trump, how many aces
Some cards we wish we could put back
We observe the players' faces

How many trump, how many aces
Now comes the bid, we want to win
We observe the players' faces
We are ready to begin

Now comes the bid, we want to win
My partner allows the bid to pass
We observe the player's faces
The game puts us in a special class

My partner allows the bid to pass
It's my turn now to make my move
The game puts us in a special class
We are polite, thoughtful and smooth

It’s my turn now to make my move
I bid high, we start the game
We are polite, thoughtful, and smooth
We don’t care, it’s all the same

I bid high, we start the game
A giant score we hope to reach
We don’t care, it’s all the same
We play the cards, twelve cards each

Mensa Mind

2003

I close and lock my Mensa mind.
My black belt body safe inside
I eat alone, I close the blind
Behind locked gates where I reside.

My black belt body safe inside
My upscale home, lawn edged precise
behind locked gates where I reside
bolted doors locked once, then twice.

My upscale home, lawn edged precise
rare antiques, imported art
bolted doors locked once, then twice
Set me above, set me apart.

Rare antiques, imported art
I count my cash and lock the safe
Set me above, set me apart
I represent the chosen race.

I count my cash and lock the safe
I eat alone, I close the blind
I represent the chosen race
I close and lock my Mensa mind.

Passion

When the word “passion” becomes a front-and-center thought, bumping around in a creative brain, it stimulates confusion. What does it mean?

Are we talking about the kiss-and-run, hormone driven, pimple squeezing, chair squirming, self-centered, all-the-way, inexperienced, passion of youth?

Or are we talking about the passion of old age – the fear of death, the drain of illness, and an unspoken desire to move on?

With time, experience, and maturity comes a passion to share. We watch a new play on a tiny stage, or listen to a grand orchestra performing the classics in a sound sensitive auditorium. We encourage the young child to read aloud, and we put his art on the wall. The passion of appreciation allows us to respond as well as give, and we are able to enjoy the talents of others again and again.

The passion of community may be demonstrated through mob thinking resulting in reactionary riots. Or community passion can be shown by adoring fans at a high school basketball game. Creative

passion is a parade of artists flaunting their costumes in city streets. Community passion can unite or divide. Just choose a side.

However we define it, passion is expressed through intense emotion accompanied by a compulsion to act.

Perspective

Dreams and hopes are for the strong and young
A master's whip to shrink the pain and shame
Of failure and regret. The songs unsung
Push on where the lure of dreams proclaim
Discovery of new art, invention, or fling.
Dreams grow hands and feet or teeth and claws
To scratch and reach the depths that let us cling
To an untold future with applause.

We use energy drawn from the heart
To proclaim a yet-to-be grand start.
By turning soft and vague into shapes we see
Dreams are complete when they become reality.

As time goes on our dreams have taken shape
With added dimensions, fame, and history
Until we tire and yearn for acceptable escape
From what was once great opportunity.
As dreams calcify and become rigid
Their demands still occupy our time
We avoid growing bored and frigid
By searching for nuances to refine.

So let us honor the transitioned dreams
And close the doors and split the seams
Untie the knots and set the breezes free
So what was once a dream can be a memory.

I Like

1995

I like ice cream in the park
Movies after dark
Castles made of stone
Spending time alone
Music in the night
Love by candlelight
Traveling afar
Science from a star
Mystic webs of life
Overcoming strife
All of these I like.

Handsome men in jeans
Singing western themes
Live theater in town
With dinner in the round
To balance my book of checks
Avoiding auto wrecks
A raise in monthly pay
Compliments any day
An easy flow of tasks
Having joyous moments last
All of these I like.

Purry cat-like pets
Sprays of water jets
Flower blooms in fall
Distant friends who call
The quiet morning light
The dark of winter night
A lover's gentle touch
Words that mean so much
A walk along a stream
And following my dreams
All of these I like.

The Duchess of Green

Royalty, she is but not quite a queen
She is the Duchess, the Duchess of Green
British design under the bonnet
Quality inside as well as what's on it
I chose the color, the leather, the wheels
I like how she looks, I like how she feels
My Mini Cooper is quick to respond
To flow on the road, here and beyond
She keeps me warm, she keeps me dry
She had her tenth birthday this year in July
She's easy on gas, needs little repair
She's fun to drive and requires little care
With thirty-five thousand miles on her clock
A long ride with her is one city block
She is my royalty, she is my queen
She is my duchess, my Duchess of Green.

Gardening and Nature

Seasons

The seasons decorate the stage
Winter struts, dark as ink
Spring, a favorite of every age
Flows in on yellow, red, and pink

Winter struts, dark as ink
Dictates shape, line and space
Flows in on yellow, red, and pink
Ornate and delicate as lace

Dictates shape, line and space
Summer gives a good supply
Ornate and delicate as lace
On which autumn will rely

Summer gives a good supply
We enjoy and appreciate
On which autumn will rely
The stage is set to create

We enjoy and appreciate
Spring, a favorite of every age
The stage is set to create
The seasons decorate the stage

The Garden

2014

First signs of spring, a fresh tilled garden plot
Its soil removed of rocks and sodden lumps
Rake and hoe come next to complete the lot
To plant the seed in rows without bumps.

Ten days of brown with water every day
Till one new sprout heralds a row of green
Leaves spread out and grow in every way
Then radish bulbs and lettuce leaves are seen.

Peas and beans begin the summer harvest
With beets, and kale, and corn and new potatoes
Squash, and garlic, okra and all the rest
And best of all, large, ripe red tomatoes.

The backyard garden yields its annual spoils
Thanks to a gardener's work and rich black soils.

Good Morning Earth

2015

I just woke up, my sleep was long
I send up first a blade of green
The birds are back, filled with song
But much is sleeping, still unseen

I send up first a blade of green
My purple head seeks the sun
But much is sleeping still unseen
We tell the world, winter's done

My purple head seeks the sun
I open wide, so all can see
We tell the world, winter's done
I am spring, warm and free

I open wide, so all can see
The purple smile just for you
I am spring, warm and free
Pleasures many, disappointments few

The purple smile, just for you
The birds are back, filled with song
Pleasures many, disappointments few
I just woke up, my sleep was long

To Make Music

2014

Peas and carrots, lettuce and thyme
Something to eat, something to rhyme
Words like music, beat out the time
To make music.

A robin sings in a nearby tree
A noisy squirrel chatters with glee
The animals wander happy and free
To make music.

The child with a drum beats out a sound
His sister sings from music she found
The family is learning all around
To make music.

Snapshots
2014

Billowing clouds fill the sky with story,
Frightening monsters in caves breathing fire
And docile sheep on rain drenched grassy knolls
Cross the stage so all of us can see
The pictures in the sky.

With morning rain before the rising sun
A fisherman wades across a meandering stream.
He casts a fly that lays out flat and clean
And snap, he has the catch of his lifetime,
A trophy fish to mount.

A family in a three-day blackout blizzard
Wrap each other in blankets to keep warm.
The candles glow, the fireplace crackles,
And contentment paints another brushstroke
In the family portrait.

A butterfly sits and flits and glides
Like the brief touch of a lover's kiss.
The purr of a cat and the wag of a tail
Stay in the heart where images blend
Into mosaic memory.

Comfortably cocooned in a favorite afghan,
Tears subside and eyelids gently close.
Grandma's lullaby soothes the bite of fatigue,
And the infant nods and gives in to sleep
To dream the pictures in his mind.

Tranquility lives and dies in an instant
But remains available forever when paired
With a favorite chair, a drink, or song,
A quiet experience of reflection and appreciation,
A snapshot of life well lived.

Opening Dawn

The stage is set, the houselights down,
The orchestra begins its morning overture.
Crows caw the percussion,
Warblers and chickadees belt out the melody,
Robins and jays provide accompaniment,
All rehearsed and practiced,
Their talent imprinted on their DNA.

Discordant distant traffic,
Unnatural and imposed,
Wheezes and rumbles uncensored,
Much too close to center stage.

A jagged black horizon,
Outlining a flannel sky,
Gives way to rooftops and chimneys
And color.
Back turns to green
Muted tones to red and orange
And night turns to day.

Minor players:
The black knight delphinium,
Sharp scented geranium,
And lusty earthy compost,
Await the entrance of the famous one,

The one we came to see,
The morning sun.

But Sun speaks from behind a milky screen.
Wait, it says, *wait for tomorrow.*
Cold mist fills the stage.
A black cloud wraps around the day
And rains the curtain down.

Newborn Pink

2003

Behind rose laden screens
of spring, pale Newborn
Pink says, “One more start.”
Innocence says, “I do.”

Summer skies, blue and white
fluffy clouds float free
and pure on wispy dreams,
wishes on a slippery string.

Dust brown dirty dragons
hide their heads in wait
to tear away the masks
shown cruel in August’s heat.

Red-gold leaves swirl
muted, mixed and blended.
Autumn’s bounty fills the
stomach and the heart.

Black and white, ice and doubt
wrap around naive feet.
Kicked aside, ice melts,
in walks Newborn Pink.

August

August, king of vacations, sputters the deals
The special fares, the reduced rates, the percent off
Just to get to know you, to know your ways
Come, shed your clothes and play in the sun.

August cannot boast the weddings of June
Nor wave the flag as well as patriotic July
Hot, lazy, August escapes to the lake
Or a baseball field or a spot of shade in the yard.

August, the vault collecting the spoils of summer
Its golden gourds, squash, carrots, and corn
Saved to decorate a Thanksgiving table
And a webbed and tarnished Halloween fence.

Smoldering, sizzling, golden waves of grain
Just a few degrees from leaps of flame
Driven by the wind and by the heat
Bring blackened endings to unfilled dreams.

Falling leaves

2003

Falling leaves and gusty winds may wash
the soil and kill the last of summer dreams.
And end the hope of corn and summer squash
Amid the vivid orange and softened creams.

Leaves turn black. The nip of early frost,
makes the flowers cry goodbye. They wait
for summer next beneath the soil, not lost,
A future lush display they will create.

Although, my friend, you're not a summer bloom,
you are much like the wilted garden plant.
Your smile is gone, replaced with winter's gloom,
your spirit frosted by a siren chant.

Thoughts torment. Perplexing questions clog
my brain. Must I accept what you have found,
a guarded space with fence and barking dog,
And the welcome mat turned upside down?

Or will your roots grow deep, your problems heal,
concealed behind your tragic drama mask,
emerge in spring when tender shoots reveal
survivors of the long cold winter's blast?

Growing Old

Emotions

Puffs of cooling delight float in gray
Clouds and rest in cool dark corners
Where regret teases both the owners
With a large disappointment of the day.

Almost unseen, particles unseen stay
In the air and settle one by one
To the corners where they appear to run
To safety and seek others as they play

The floating puffs become a gang of memories
To be removed by the marching feet of time
And a strong wind and clinging chime
Make the clouds blow away with ease.

I Should

I should
Give thanks with prayers and cheers
For my accomplishments both small and grand
For the never ending successes of my years
And appreciate my footprints in the sand.

I could
Give to others what I no longer use
And adapt to the person I am to date
Relax and reflect in comfortable shoes
And find a place to meditate.

I would
Be a lazy aging self centered me
Sometimes well and sometimes not
Finding what is flowing free
And write about things I forgot.

Long Lost Youth

2015

Old sneaks in, unannounced. Change
Becomes part of us, and life goes on.
It seems our Maker has chosen to rearrange
Who we are, and we realize that youth has gone.

Bright red hair turns to medium gray
Clear smooth skin to wrinkles, tags and spots
We notice something lost every day
We're different now than when we were tots.

We wish to focus our conscious intentions
We do our best to live as we decide
But we are grateful for modern inventions
To slow the pace toward the inevitable last ride.

We lament leaving so much undone,
Our youth was wasted when we were young.

I Am Age

2014

I am age
I come alone in the night
I am gray and slow and quiet
I neither speak nor act
I am just there.

I come alone
I come in the quiet
I come at the end of your life
I end the light
But I come.

You are afraid
But I am not the one to fear
I am only the messenger
I come with aloneness
I come with death.

Are you ready?
Are you ready to be alone?
Are you ready to be slow and inept?
Are you ready for eternal light?
Are you ready for death?
For I come.

A Tiny Star

2017

Across the waters of eternity
A distant glow reaches out to me
A tiny star
My personal lighthouse
My link to tomorrow.

A faraway light – a tiny star
Invites my need for change
My guide beyond the darkness
A link to tomorrow

A tiny star
Will guide me beyond the darkness
Old and alone, I wait
Between life now and life beyond
When my time is spent and I am gone.

Life

1976

To be alive is to be adventuresome
To be curious about life and what it holds
To make mistakes but learn
To grow into creative beings with the courage
To feel the pain and then go on.

An Easy Love

You are strong, brittle, crystalline,
And I have loved you long and well.
You've been a fine companion,
And we have shared a host of dells.
Our dining friends, fork and knife,
Increase the pleasures that we feel,
We've been together all my life,
My lust for you is old and real.
You are desired, I hope you know,
But the cost to me is high.
You cause me pain. I must let you go.
Salt, it's time to say good bye.

Patricia Swan wrote her first poem, a limerick, at about the age of five. Overall, she estimates she has written "probably a couple hundred." She says, "I'm not a prolific writer, I'm a thoughtful writer."

Her favorite poem in this collection is *Duchess of Green*, about her 2005 black-over-green Mini Cooper, now driven and cared for by her grandson.

She credits her love of poetry to her father who would recite poetry in the family home. "It was like storytelling time," she says.

Other influences include Carl Sandburg (*Chicago*), Robert Frost (*Stopping by Woods*), T.S.Elliot (*Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*), and the *Tilbury Town* collection Edwin Arlington Robinson.

After a long and successful career as a Cooperative Extension Agent for Oregon State University, Patricia retired to Washington state to spoil her grandchildren and hone her writing skills. She currently lives and works in Lacey, WA.